

Media Release



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

June 1, 2023

2023/24 Operating Budget Approved by Board of Trustees

The Rocky View Schools Board of Trustees (the Board) approved the 2023/24 operating budget with a priority on providing funding, supports and resources directly into schools where they can have the greatest positive impact on student learning.

"RVS remains committed to providing our 28,000 students with a world-class education and maximizing our budget to direct student learning dollars into our classrooms," said Board Chair Norma Lang. "This budget is a reflection of what we heard from families, students and staff should be the division's focus to improve student learning."

The Board has approved spending \$318.2 million with 92 per cent of total instructional funding from government going directly to schools. These funds will staff schools and classrooms, pay for school-based supplies and be allocated to teaching and resource supports in areas such as numeracy and literacy, inclusion, new curriculum implementation, English as an Additional Language, Indigenous knowledge-building, and mental health and wellness for students and staff.

RVS expects to welcome nearly 1,100 additional students next September, an enrolment growth of 3.8 per cent. With 49 new teachers, the division's 1,315 full-time equivalent teaching team will support the growing student population while maintaining classroom sizes as best possible.

"The division and schools work hard to stretch every dollar of funding we receive from the province to offer students the best possible education and supports," said Lang. "The provincial weighted moving average (WMA) funding negatively impacts growing divisions and for RVS this means that we must educate nearly 800 students next fall without any instructional grants." As a result of the WMA, RVS will use \$1 million in reserves to support the enrolment growth expected next fall that the WMA does not fund. Operating reserves at the end of the 2023/24 school year are projected to be 1.5 per cent of the total operating budget, well within the government's guidance (1-3 per cent).

The Board plans to continue to advocate for construction funding from the government on critically needed schools in Airdrie, Cochrane and Chestermere as space pressures increase.

Schools' access to literacy and numeracy supports and to English as an Additional Language and Indigenous programming has increased recognizing this an important need as the division works to advance goal number one of the Strategic Plan to deliver excellent instruction with a focus on numeracy and literacy.

This budget will continue to ensure RVS offers diverse learning opportunities and environments such as two online schools, Community Learning Centres, Building Futures and RVS Mechanics Training Centre. "Over the years, through various partnerships and division investments, RVS has developed unique opportunities to meet a variety of student learning needs," said Superintendent of Schools Greg Luterbach. "This budget demonstrates the Board's ongoing commitment to building future-ready students and supporting students in achieving success in a variety of ways."

The Board will submit its 2023/24 Budget along with the 2023 – 2027 Education Plan to Alberta Education following this approval.

For more information see the Budget Background, attached. RVS' 2023/24 Budget will be posted to the RVS website shortly.

For more information, contact:
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Budget Background:

The 2022 – 2026 RVS Strategic Plan sets the priorities, goals and outcomes for the division to provide students with an education and school experience that supports them in achieving their absolute best. In support of advancing this plan and meeting the operational needs of the division, the Board has aligned the budget priorities for 2023/24 with the strategic plan priorities:

- Improving our students' learning
- Strengthening our workforce
- Bolstering our infrastructure
- Connecting with our community

2023/24 budget highlights

- Overall expenditures total \$318.2 million.
- 3.8 per cent projected increase in enrolment over current year to 28,759 students.
- The total allocation to schools is \$217.5 million (92 per cent of the total instructional funding provided by the government). Of this amount, \$209.7 million will go directly to schools and \$7.8 million will be managed centrally to provide additional support for school needs such as substitute teacher costs, technology staffing, equipment purchases and supplies.

Teachers

- 1,315 full-time teachers across the division (total).
- 49 additional full-time equivalent teachers.
- 80 learning support teachers dedicated to supporting learners with complex needs in all RVS schools:
 - One learning support teacher located in each Kindergarten – Grade 8/9 school and additional supports provided for larger student populations.
 - 19 learning support teachers dedicated across RVS high schools depending on student needs.

Budget highlights continued

- Specialized grant funding rates increased by 10 per cent and an additional \$1.3 million grant was provided for complex classrooms resulting in an overall funding increase of \$4.4 million. Grants for specialized learning are now in line with what RVS was already spending.
- RVS continues to be negatively impacted by the provincial funding model of using a Weighted Moving Average (WMA) resulting in RVS needing to educate 28,759 students while only receiving grants for 27,903 students. The WMA results in 801 students needing to be educated without there being any base instruction grants to RVS for these students.
- Supports for inclusion directed to schools have been maintained at \$15 million plus a further \$7.1 million for divisional staff (e.g., psychologists, speech-language pathologists, family school liaisons, etc.) to support all schools.
- Operations and Maintenance (OM) funding from the government was increased by five per cent resulting in a total increase of \$1.3 million. This increase was \$800,000 beyond the \$500,000 expected for projected enrolment growth but still does not fully address cost pressures related to inflation, rising utility and insurance costs. Funding for OM continues to be a challenge given the current utilization rates of RVS schools where over utilized schools do not receive any additional funding to address additional maintenance and cleaning costs.
- Transportation fees for 2023/24 will be kept at the current level maintaining the early registration discount.
- RVS will not be extending eligibility for bus riders in 2023/24 given the concerns expressed by our contracted transportation providers with obtaining sufficient buses and drivers. Maintaining current eligibility standards for 2023/24 is expected to result in funding of \$16.2 million.
- Governance and system administration funding was unfrozen and reset to current funding levels based on current enrolment. Funding is now \$9.6 million and while expenses have increased to provide additional staffing in the areas of human resources, school finance, and schools department, a total of \$890,000 was transferred to instruction to cover unfunded costs.

- Given the funding available this year and the removal of one-time reserve funds, it is necessary to reduce the caretaking spending. Division planning is underway to maintain a similar level of service to keep our schools clean with less spending.
- In support of the division's priority to strengthen our workforce, a two per cent wage increase was approved for support and exempt staff. This is consistent with what teachers will receive through the provincially negotiated settlement.
- Schools are planning to spend an additional \$900,000 from their school carry forward reserves to further support local school initiatives.
- The Board is allocating \$1 million from reserves to support enrolment growth that may occur in the fall.
- The projected ending balance for operating reserves as of August 31, 2024 will be \$4.6 million or 1.5 per cent of the total operating budget.